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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: Advancing Religious Freedom: Ambassador's Meeting with Uzbek  
Deputy FM

REF: 09 STATE 58954

CLASSIFIED BY: Nicholas Berliner, Pol-Econ Chief; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) The Ambassador met on June 10 with First Deputy Foreign Minister Hamidulla Karamatov to discuss reftel points and ways forward on the religious freedom issue. Karamatov said that he understood the importance of the issue and the need to work together to find mutually acceptable language as the basis upon which to address the problem of Uzbekistan's CPC designation. He agreed with the Ambassador's assessment that the current climate of improving bilateral relations made discussions of these issues easier and said that the Foreign Ministry would work on drafting language, drawing from the two letters that were proposed by Hanford last December. Referring to the President's Cairo speech, Karamatov also suggested that language from the speech could serve as points of agreement on religious freedom. Karamatov also invited the close cooperation of the Embassy in the process.

¶2. (C) Comment: We believe we have a real opportunity to move forward on this issue. However, we also need to set our sights on what is achievable in the context of Uzbekistan and should not expect that the Uzbeks will agree to early binding commitments that will result in fundamental changes in how the government here interacts with the country's various religious communities. Religious freedom is inseparable from the larger set of human rights problems in Uzbekistan. Our objective now should be the initiation of a serious dialogue that allows us to comply with the requirements of the International Religious Freedom Act with a view to managing this issue as part of our overall dialogue with the GOU on human rights.  
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